

Arthur Church



CHURCH
VIEW

Blues' boss needs a sense of humour

QUITE apart from the fact that mine is not usually a sports column, I thought that before I waded in with my two-pennyworth on the subject of Alan Smith's departure from his managerial post at Adams Park I would let the dust settle a bit.

Knowing Ivor Beeks, the Blues' chairman, as well as I do, I'm sure he was saddened by the part he had to play in the drama. He's a kindly man but once the decision had been made he would not shirk it. Ivor's a man who will go miles out of his way to be helpful and I was glad to see that Mr Smith himself acknowledged this.

Indeed, in all I have read and heard of the ex-manager's comments since his departure it's about the only good thing he had to say about Wycombe! I rather agree with director Alan Parry's observation that he had hoped Mr Smith would have gone with dignity.

It may strike you as strange that Mr Smith, on TV interviews and in press reports of his comments, admits to no fault in himself. A little bit one-sided, I would think.

We are none of us faultless and must be aware of areas in which we might have done better.

**We would all have
been much happier if
Mr Smith had been
even moderately
successful**

It was even reported that he thinks that because he came from London and drove a posh car he was not welcomed by the Wanderers' fans.

Come now, Mr Smith, we may be in the country but we are not

While I acknowledge that every club has at least one idiot yob capable of causing trouble, Wycombe supporters have a high reputation, far and wide, for sporting behaviour but their loyalty and respect, freely given, has, on a continuing basis, to be earned.

I'm sure we would all have been much happier if Mr Smith had been even moderately successful at Wycombe and his tenure, therefore, longer.

I'm sorry for him in a sense, as I would be for anyone unfortunate enough to lose his job, but the facts have to be faced.

One hard fact was that, somewhere along the line, something wasn't gelling.

I know little or nothing about football management or coaching skills and I would not want to make odious comparisons, but I have a feeling that there was one area in which Saint Martin scored while at Wycombe – he had a rapport with the players and spectators alike and a keen sense of humour.

He could effortlessly turn criticism, when there was any, into a joke against himself; after all, he was Irish.

Let me illustrate that. After one game at Adams Park which had been a particularly poor one from both sides I turned to Mr Smith, sitting behind me, and remarked (I thought jocularly): "Never mind, I don't think there was anything very good on TV either."

He gave me a glare which if looks could kill would have put me out on the spot.

Now, Martin would have laughed with me or capped it with a joke of his own.

So my advice to Mr Smith, for what it's worth, is contained in that old line: "Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone".

I really do hope that he finds success elsewhere and I hope even more that when the Blues' directors meet to appoint his successor they give some marks on their assessment cards to evidence of a sense of humour.

Heaven knows, any football manager must find life difficult enough anyway.

One last word or two: since Mr Smith's departure the Blues have won two games. It could be purely coincidental. But then again...